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St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Trust



# News

# 'n' Views

Special Edition



## Royal approval for Whiston Hospital

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# The Official Opening of the new Whiston Hospital

The Trust was privileged to welcome HRH The Countess of Wessex GCVO to officially open the new Whiston Hospital on 24th April 2013.

The hospital stood gleaming in the sunshine, with its gardens and flowers beautifully in bloom, as the flashing blue lights of Police motorbikes and a procession of official cars swept into view. The motorcade was escorting a very special visitor towards cheering crowds of staff and visitors who were eagerly awaiting the arrival of Her Royal Highness the Countess of Wessex.



The Countess could not have received a warmer welcome as every window on every level at the front of the hospital was crowded with staff and patients who had taken it upon themselves to find a perfect view of the anticipated arrival. This is the first Royal visit to Whiston Hospital in its 148 year history. Now it was the turn of the new hospital to take centre stage and showcase the Trust's world class modern healthcare facilities.



Our Royal visitor stepped from her vehicle to a rousing round of applause from the gathering crowd. She was escorted by the Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside Dame Lorna Muirhead DBE and introduced to the Vice Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside, Mr David McDonnell CBE DL, the High Sheriff of Merseyside, Mr Ian Meadows OBE DL and the Mayor and Mayoress of Knowsley, Councillor Norman Hogg and Wendy Hogg.

Before Her Royal Highness made her way in to the hospital, she went out of her way to talk to the many members of staff outside the main entrance who had waited for her to arrive. She asked them about their roles at the hospital and asked if they were returning to work after her visit. The Countess said how pleased she was to be able to meet everyone.



Her Royal Highness then rushed straight over to meet some mini Royal supporters Euan, Izzy, Poppy, Joe, Kyle, Joel, Claudia, Frankie and Oliver who had arrived from Lynwood Day Nursery, Prescot to greet the Countess. She crouched down talking with the little visitors who had practised their bows and curtsies especially for the occasion.



Her Royal Highness was then introduced to Les Howell CBE, Chairman and Ann Marr, Chief Executive by the Mayor of Knowsley, Councillor Norman Hogg. Ann proudly invited the Countess inside where more patients, staff and visitors waited to applaud the Countess as she walked into the hospital.



The Countess was then escorted by Ann Marr, Chief Executive and Les Howell CBE, Chairman to some wards and departments around the hospital.

Her Royal Highness was first shown the NHS sign by the Outpatient Department on Level 1. The sign shows in pictures the journey the hospital has taken from the old Victorian workhouse hospital building to world class facilities in the new Whiston Hospital. Within the 'N' of the NHS artwork are pictures of the old hospital and its history, the 'H' has photographs showing the construction of the new building and the demolition of the old hospital, and the 'S' is an assortment of images of the state of the art facilities provided at the new hospital.

The surprised look on people's faces was unforgettable as they walked down the corridor to their clinic appointments and passed HRH The Countess of Wessex, not expecting to see a member of the Royal Family whilst at the hospital.



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The party then moved on to the Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU) where the Countess met Consultant Obstetrician Tennyson Idama and Ward Manager Caroline Deveney.



Her Royal Highness spent time with a number of babies and families on the unit, even having a cuddle with one of the newest arrivals. The Countess, who has two children of her own, asked parents about the weight of their babies at birth, the care their little ones were receiving and how long the babies were expected to stay in the unit. She was keen to know how mums were able to find clothes so small for their babies, and spoke of her own experience of becoming a new mum. Although it can be a worrying time for parents of poorly babies being treated in the unit, the Countess shared plenty of smiles and laughs with the parents and really helped to brighten the day of those she met.

Baby Eve Carmichael (cuddled by the Countess) and her brother Cameron, from Huyton, weighed 1.46kg and 1.68kg at birth and were 14 days old on the day of the Countess' visit.

The Countess looked in on baby Amelia Connolly, who weighed 1.20kg at birth, with her mum Natalie during her tour of the Special Care Baby Unit.



It was then on to Ward 3Alpha where the Countess talked to patients Sheila Daintith and Jeremiah O'Sullivan, amongst others, about their stay on the trauma and orthopaedic ward. She asked how they had sustained their injuries and about their physiotherapy routines. Her Royal Highness was very interested in hearing about the operations each patient had undergone and discussed the technicalities of the operations with Clinical Director, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon, Mike Manning, Matron, Ali Kennah and Ward Manager, Maria Stead. The visit was a great lift for those who met the Countess, as she put patients at ease with her warmth and friendly nature, encouraging patients to have a positive attitude in their recovery and wishing them the best of luck in their rehabilitation.





Moving on from Ward 3Alpha, the Countess then visited the Prosthetics Department. The department specialise in the production of bespoke prosthetics for patients who have suffered trauma, cancer or life-changing disfigurement.

The Countess was shown some of the many types of prosthetics by Principal Burns and Plastic Surgery Prosthetist, Elaine Goldsworthy and Clinical Director, Consultant Plastic Surgeon, Paul McArthur.



Elaine explained how the prosthetics are individually made for each patient, replicating skin tone, shape and even including minute details such as hair follicles on areas such as fingers, toes and the face.

The importance of detail and the benefits to patients was emphasised as Her Royal Highness met patient John Barker and his granddaughter Amy. John suffered from cancer to the eye area and the Countess spoke to him at length about his illness, treatment, and the difference having such an accurately matched prosthetic has made to his quality of life. She was amazed at how realistic John's prosthetic looked and remarked that he was 'a very handsome man'.



On Ward 3F, Children and Young People's Ward, the Countess was met by Consultant Paediatrician, Dr Abubaker Elbadri, Lead Nurse, Sally Duce and Ward Manager, Janet Bentham. The Countess spoke with a number of patients and staff on the ward. Her Royal Highness spent time discussing teddy bears with patient Ffion Davies, aged 2, and was very interested to hear about Ffion's birthday party, which impressed the Countess as she discovered it would be a pink themed party. The Countess was very natural with the children and chatted happily with them and their families. Patient, Jodie Webster had only just returned to the ward following surgery that day, and HRH spoke gently to Jodie, asking how she was feeling and wishing her a quick and speedy recovery. She also said that she hoped Jodie would receive a special treat for being such a brave little girl.



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On the final stop of the tour, the Royal party made their way to the Spice of Life Restaurant to be greeted by patients, staff, volunteers and guests all eager to hear her thoughts having had the opportunity to see the state of the art facilities for herself.

Her Royal Highness was introduced to members of the Project Team, who helped to plan and co-ordinate the building of the new Whiston Hospital. The Countess met Peter Williams, Director of Corporate Services, who introduced Ron Morgan, Architect Capita Symonds, Paul Harris, Project Director for Vinci Construction, Geoff Hunter, Head of Estates, Dyan Clegg, Head of PFI and Facilities Management and Angela Appleton, who was the Project Team's Head of Planning. The Countess spoke with the team regarding the redevelopment from the old Victorian workhouse buildings to the new world class facilities in the heart of the community and congratulated them on delivering such a high quality facility.



Her Royal Highness then met staff representatives from across the Trust including Elspeth Worthington, Consultant in Emergency Medicine, who introduced Kate Langley, Ward Manager, Joanne Watkinson, Radiographer, Diana Lewis, HR Business Partner, Sue Spooner, Domestic, John Barton, Charge Nurse and Peter Williams Consultant in Acute and Emergency Medicine. Her Royal Highness spoke to each member of staff about their individual roles and said how impressed she had been seeing the work that takes place in the hospital. The Countess spoke of the patients she had met at the hospital, remarked that it was 'unbelievable' what could be achieved for patients and revealed how impressed she had been by the services staff provided.

The Countess then met and shared a joke with hospital volunteers Dorothy Williamson, Patricia Hall, Norman Holden, Sheila Hepke, Phyllis Haigh and Christine Howard. The Countess joked that she hoped the volunteers would get preferential treatment should they ever get ill and thanked them for their dedicated work for the Trust. She told the volunteers that hospitals across the country could not survive without the commitment and service of people like them.



On her way to the stage, the Countess made sure she chatted with as many patients and staff members as she could and made time for everyone, instantly putting them at ease with her relaxed and friendly personality.

To bring the special occasion to a close, Ann Marr, Chief Executive gave a speech to the assembled audience of local dignitaries, including the Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside, Vice Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside, the High Sheriff of Merseyside, the Mayor and Mayoress of Knowsley, the Mayor and Mayoress of Whiston, the Mayor and Mayoress of St Helens and the Mayor and Mayoress of Halton, Trust Executives, patients, staff and volunteers.



Ann spoke of the progress the Trust has made since the old Victorian workhouse hospital building, to a world class hospital, fitted with the most advanced and modern equipment available. She emphasised the importance of providing the very best healthcare to the local community and thanked MPs, local authorities, partner organisations and local community groups for their support through the years of planning and hard work that went into building the new hospital.

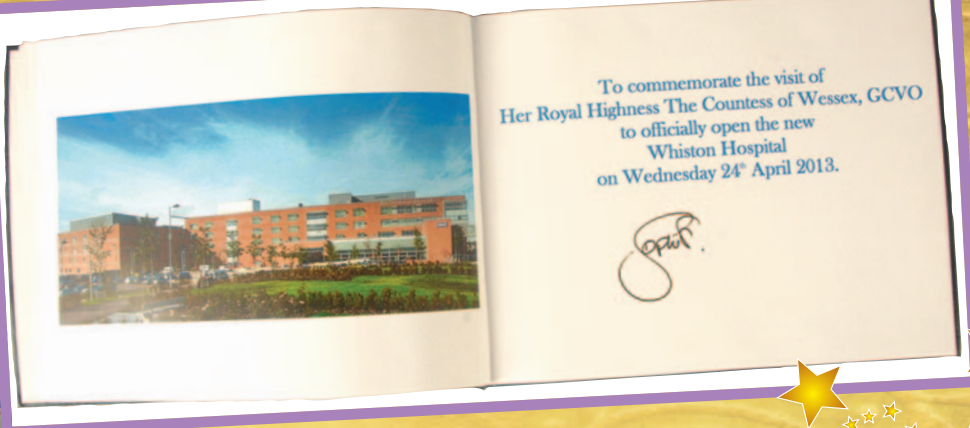


Ann's speech was followed by a few words from the Countess who thanked staff and patients for the warm reception she had received throughout her visit. Her Royal Highness also congratulated the Trust and its staff on the world class facilities provided at the hospital and spoke of how impressed she had been seeing all of the exceptional facilities and services provided.

Her Royal Highness then declared the hospital officially open, unveiling a glass plaque

that features a picture of the new hospital in all its splendour. The plaque, which is now displayed in the main entrance to the hospital, celebrates the official opening and features the Countess' name and the date of the official opening of the hospital. Her Royal Highness then signed the hospital's visitor's book and, showing a personal touch, she simply signed her name 'Sophie', marking her very special visit to the Trust.





After saying goodbye to distinguished guests, patients and staff, Her Royal Highness received a posy of flowers from 4 year old Grace Walker-Reid (who was born at Whiston Hospital) to thank her for visiting the Trust and performing the official opening ceremony.

She then returned to her car and drove away from the hospital, leaving all those who were part of the visit delighted to have been involved in such an extraordinary occasion.



The day was a proud moment for everyone involved in the planning and construction of the hospital. Many special memories will be taken from the day for all those who met HRH the Countess of Wessex. The visit was very successful and thoroughly enjoyed by patients, staff and the local community, celebrating the new Whiston Hospital.



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